Life in the Movie Magazines

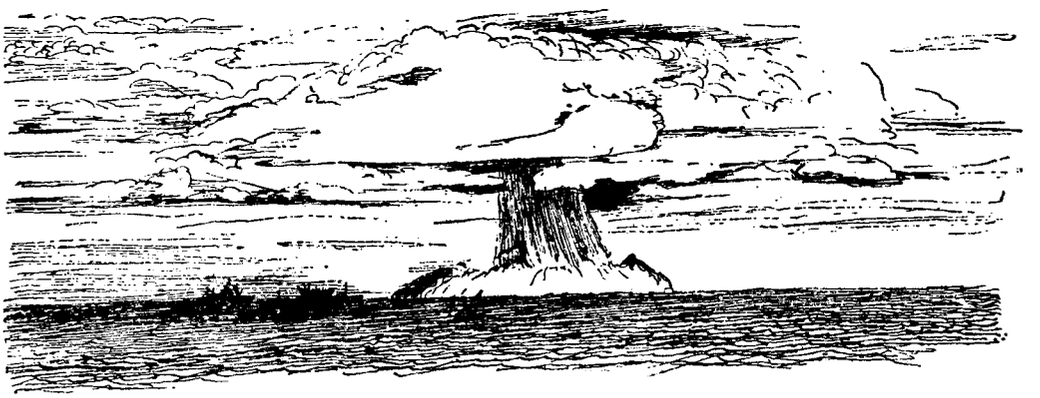
—John P. Sisk

THE

Commonweal

THE MORALITY OF NUCLEAR WAR

by F. H. Drinkwater



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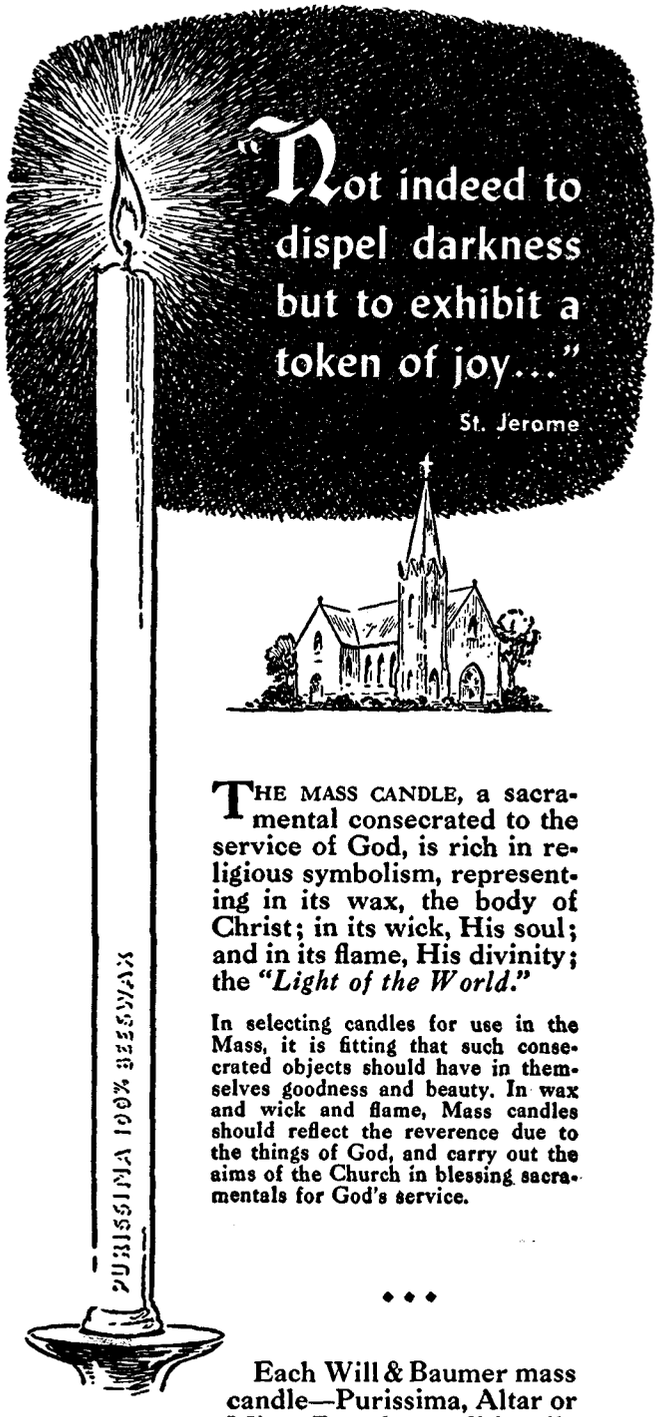

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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 619
The Morality of Nuclear War *by F. H. Drinkwater* 623
Why Mendès-France Was Defeated *by Robert Barrat* 627
A Case of Ignorance *by John Cogley* 629
The Stage *by Richard Hayes* 630
The Screen *by Philip T. Hartung* 630
Of Note 632
Communications 632
Life in the Movie Magazines *by John P. Sisk* 634
Books 636

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The Commonweal

week by week

THE RECORD

AN advertising executive who became a diplomat, Chester Bowles, returned early this month to India, a nation with whose aspirations and accomplishments he has been deeply concerned. He returned to New Delhi at an uncomfortable time. American prestige in Asia has slipped badly and has only recently begun to recover.

The feeling of solidarity which Asians once felt towards this country, maker of the first successful colonial revolution, has since 1945 been eroded by a complex of factors. Among them were these: The United States was no longer remote and idealized, but was seen in its imperfect reality. The intellectual climate of the new Asian democracies was socialist and the United States was seen as aggressively capitalist. The United States was associated with racial discrimination, and with rightist, dictatorial governments in Asia. The United States passed through the throes of McCarthyism and Communist propaganda succeeded in convincing many Asians that McCarthyism was identical with fascism. The United States had used the atom bomb against Asians. All of these things, taken together, made many see the United States no longer as a liberal, anti-colonial democracy, but as a grasping and aggressive state seeking to establish anti-Chinese, anti-Russian puppets in the Orient.

These factors were not all, of course. Nationalism, neutralism, anti-Westernism—all would have existed in resurgent Asia even if there were no United States of America. But the special circumstances of the cold war gave many in Asia a chance to make the United States the psychological scapegoat for all the wrongs of the past, all the frustrations of the present.

When Mr. Bowles returned to New Delhi, then, relations were frostier than they were in those days when he lived in that city as United States Ambassador. He was to speak to the Indian Council for World Affairs, and took the opportunity to make a remarkably apt address, one which might well be given in many countries, to many audiences.

"What is necessary," he told his Indian audience, "is that Americans and Indians . . . develop a relationship based on a profound tolerance of each other's views, an objective determination to judge the other fairly, and respect for each other's devotion to a common ideal."

HE then listed twelve facts about recent history. Some of these American actions can now be seen to have been wrong—in the postwar years, some were horribly wrong; some were magnificently right. None of them show "aggression" towards the USSR.

1. In spite of the notorious 1939 Nazi-Soviet pact, the U.S. sent fourteen billion dollars worth of supplies, delivered at the cost of many American lives, to help the Russians save themselves from the Nazis.

2. At Yalta, "coexistence was clearly our policy," and we made grave concessions to the Soviet Union's demand for "friendly" neighbors. "Now Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania and Rumania are no more free than any other colonial possessions."

3. At the end of World War II the U.S. had "perhaps the most powerful armed force in history. Instead of using this power to dictate *our* version of the peace, we set out to disband it. By Christmas 1946 our army was almost out of existence."

4. In 1946 we offered to destroy our atomic bombs and give all our atomic information to an international authority, provided only that there were measures to prevent the secret manufacture of the bomb elsewhere in the world. And the hydrogen bomb was first developed and tested in Russia.

5. We have, since the war, spent thirty billion dollars of our taxes for non-military assistance to other nations—including our former enemies.

6. We withdrew from and freed the Philippines. We supported Indian and Indonesian independence during and after the war.

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7. When the USSR "delivered what amounted to an ultimatum to Greece and Turkey in 1947" we announced our determination to defend them, and the danger passed. In spite of provocation, we did not rearm until the aggression in Korea; at the time that war began we had eight ill-equipped divisions.

8. We have consistently urged general disarmament.

9. In December 1953, President Eisenhower proposed a peaceful pooling of atomic energy. "So far any action has only been on our side."

10. "We have consistently sought a free and unified Germany."

11. Our present Formosa policy is to separate Formosa from China and end the civil war.

12. Our present military budget is twenty per cent less than in 1953. The USSR's is being increased by twelve per cent and Soviet heavy industry—which is largely military—is being increased by twenty-four per cent.

One may hope that this speech made an impression on its audience. It also makes a rather encouraging recapitulation for Americans, worn by the frustrations of the cold war.

WALL STREET UNDER SCRUTINY

THE market crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression left deep scars. It is almost a generation now since millions of Americans suddenly found savings, homes, jobs, farms or family security swept away. It is hardly surprising that similar omens should lead many to scan the horizon. The continuing "bull market" and certain optimistic statements do suggest some striking parallels.

However, testimony thus far before the "friendly" Senate Banking and Currency Committee under Senator Fulbright has proved rather reassuring. Heads of the big exchanges have emphasized important contrasts between 1929 and 1955 that have not yet been successfully challenged.

In one category there are the modified regulations within the exchanges themselves and curbs enacted by the government. Exchange authorities themselves appear intent on keeping fluctuations in hand. Panic also is provided against in a general way by such New Deal cushions as social security and unemployment insurance and government insurance of mortgages and bank deposits, as well as by more substantial reserves in the hands of the corporations themselves.

The extent of present speculation is less apparent. Clearly it is not on the same scale as in 1929, when trading was six times as voluminous. The margin was raised to sixty per cent last year, but brokers have a "charge-account" system of instalment buying which has enabled clients to put up, initially, less than one-sixth of the purchase price.

Certain non-speculative factors do tend to push security prices skyward. To begin with, the number of available shares is limited and it has not materially increased during the past year. Institutions like the big life insurance companies, with millions of new funds to invest every day, exert constant pressure on the available supply of shares. The capital gains tax serves to curb the supply in discouraging stock sales in today's protracted rising market. At the same time the recent reduction of excess profits taxes, and of personal income taxes on dividends, increases the demand.

With pressures such as these, the need for the present advertising campaign urging people to "buy a share in American industry," is none too evident. If American industry is counting on millions of new investors to supply some of the capital needed for expansion in the next decade, it should concentrate primarily on the unemployment problem. That, rather than lack of capital, is the real threat to our national future prosperity. "Mass investment" will depend more on sustained and increasing purchasing power than on the most persuasive slogans our copywriters can draw up.

NEXT WEEK

HOWARD R. SIMPSON writes about President Ngo Dinh Diem and what he faces in South Viet Nam.

"One of the constant problems in Free Viet Nam is the political and military position of the sects. . . . The Cao Dai is a religio-military sect with a 'Vatican' of its own at Tay Ninh, about five hours by road from Saigon. The Cao Dai has its own 'Pope' who resides near a gingerbread cathedral upon whose altar site sits a round blue globe with the "All Seeing Eye," the Cao Dai symbol, staring out upon the faithful. . . . Checking the list of Cao Dai patron saints one sees the names of Sun Yat-sen and Victor Hugo. Winston Churchill has been nominated but only death can bring the final vote."

THE INCREDIBLE MR. MATUSOW

THE Matusow bit continues to play to a fascinated, if hostile, audience. The fervor with which Mr. Matusow now insists he was a liar is equalled only by the enthusiasm he once displayed in calling other people Communists. In the midst

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of all this, the amount of disdain now being shown in Washington for Matusow and all his works is interesting. True, Mr. Matusow does not seem the most engaging person in the world; his manner is hardly calculated to endear him to the Senators who are competing for the privilege of insulting him. But this does not seem to be the whole explanation.

The truth is that Mr. Matusow on the witness stand represents the morning-after, and Washington is full of people who would like to forget the night-before. For those who took him at face value, his tenacity in insisting that he was a liar all the time is hard to take. His revelations are embarrassingly public, and his denunciations are never merely self-denunciations.

Whether he is lying now or lied before, Mr. Matusow is obviously not a reliable witness for the government. At this writing, he says he gave false testimony about more than two hundred persons. Whether his evidence in any or all of these cases was substantial, the courts may eventually have to decide; in some cases, at least, his evidence strikes the lay observer as so much frosting on the cake. But the performance Mr. Matusow has put on in recent weeks has shocked a good many Americans; rightly or wrongly, they feel quite sure they would never have accepted his testimony on anything, not even on the right time, let alone on who was or was not a Communist.

Representative Walter of Pennsylvania is reported to favor the notion that the Communists planned this whole thing years ago. According to this theory, Matusow never really broke with the Communist Party, but has been acting under orders all the time—with the idea, of course, of doing just what he has done: waiting till the proper moment, then denouncing himself as a liar in order to discredit Congressional hearings, ex-Communists and the conviction of the Communist leaders, all at one fell swoop. The idea is neat enough. If the whole thing could be blamed on the Communists, it would save everybody concerned a lot of embarrassment. But the idea is just a little too handy, just a little too pat, and for that reason, if for no other, we have our doubts.

People are always inclined to give the Communists credit for more shrewdness than they in fact possess; in the last decade and a half they have made many an incredible mistake, and some of their biggest gains have been handed to them on a platter as a result of the mistakes of non-Communists. The Matusow affair, it seems to us, is an almost classic example of such bungling.

What happened in the Matusow case? It seems obvious that the questions that should have been asked years ago were not asked, the doubts that should have arisen did not appear. And why was this so? The answer, it seems to us, can be found in the national readiness to use any weapon at hand to beat the Communists. If a man said he was an ex-Communist or an anti-Communist, it was near-subversion to ask for his credentials or question his reliability as a witness. How else explain the reaction of some McCarthyites to even minor criticism of their hero? In the Matusow case, the Alsops cited inconsistencies and contradictions in his statements before he made his great recantation. But when they brought these matters up, you would have thought it was they who were trying to subvert the Republic.

There are some experts on Communism who are genuinely that; there are others who are not worth a headline in a Hearst paper. There are some ex-Communists who are reliable witnesses and testify from personal knowledge; there are others who are not. All ex-Communists are not like Matusow, and men like Alger Hiss were not convicted on the unsubstantiated testimony of ex-Communists. But already there seems to be real danger that these facts will be forgotten, real danger that public confidence in all ex-Communists will be undermined. Surely this outcome is a triumph for the Communist cause, and it is ironic that it has been won for them by men who pride themselves on being anti-Communist.

MR. KENNAN'S QUESTIONS

THE United States Government recently decided not to permit the further residence in this country of the Metropolitan Boris, representative of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Soviet Government, following the announcement of this decision, swiftly ordered Father Georges Bissonnette, the American Catholic priest stationed in Moscow, to leave the Soviet Union. In a letter to the New York *Times* of March 6, George Kennan observes that the circumstances of these two expulsions "make inescapable the assumption that [the Soviet] action was taken by way of retribution for the decision of the United States Government."

Mr. Kennan raises the question of whether the decision to expel the Russian Metropolitan was made by persons responsible for the over-all conduct of our foreign relations, or, through governmental confusion, by persons responsible only for internal security considerations. For, as the expulsion of Father Bissonnette indicates, the over-all consequences of our decision on the Metropolitan

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Boris are probably unfortunate indeed, and from the internal security standpoint, it is difficult to imagine, in Mr. Kennan's words, that "the security of this country would have been appreciably endangered by the Metropolitan's further presence here."

In the same letter Mr. Kennan takes up another point: the U.S. postal authorities' decision to prevent delivery of *Pravda* and *Izvestia* to persons "not authorized to receive them." The former Ambassador to Russia raises the same question here as he does in the matter of the Metropolitan Boris, for the two cases seem parallel and their possible unfortunate consequences may be similar.

But even more important, more fundamental, than Mr. Kennan's first question is another he raises: "Are there really people in our Government who believe that our political philosophy is so unconvincing, our attachment to it so weak, our youth so bewildered and gullible—and the outlook of our adversaries, on the other hand, so forceful, so logical, and so persuasive—that we must shield our people physically from every confrontation with Communist thought?" This is one of the major questions we must face as we struggle through our time of crisis, for on it the future of our institutions and the integrity of our national character depend.

NORTH KOREA BUILD-UP

THE misgivings of many on the agreements ending the Korean war have now unhappily been fully justified. The Communists have, among other things, utilized the armistice to construct forty new airfields within striking distance of the UN lines; they voice their determination to take over all Korea. A thorough-going evaluation of the UN defenses is urgent.

Violations of the armistice agreements are supposed to be in the hands of a "Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission," but its Polish and Czech members, together with Chinese and North Korean authorities, have consistently thwarted its efforts to inspect and report—let alone prevent—such flagrant flaunting of a signed agreement. With reason, the United States, supported by the Swedish and Swiss members of the commission, calls for an ending of this farce. The Chinese Communists in accordance with the terms of the agreement, refuse to permit the commission to be disbanded.

All this puts a premium on "self-enforcing" agreements when dealing with the Communists. And the trouble is that, whether general disarmament or a localized matter is at issue, to draw up an arrangement that would be genuinely self-enforcing and still acceptable will tax human ingenuity to the utmost.

SUMMERFIELD VS. ARISTOPHANES

ARTHUR E. Summerfield, the U. S. Postmaster General, has discovered "Lysistrata," although, it would seem, he has no very clear idea who its author, one "Aristophanes," might be.

The Los Angeles Post Office recently seized a rare volume of the Greek play that had been mailed from England to Harry A. Levinson, a California book dealer, and Mr. Summerfield refuses to let Mr. Levinson have the volume back, declaring that the book "contains numerous passages which are plainly obscene, lewd and lascivious . . . and almost equally certain to arouse libidinous thoughts in the minds of the average normal reader." Mr. Levinson, therefore, has asked a Federal District Court to restrain the Postmaster General from destroying the volume and to order its return.

The New York *Herald Tribune,* in its account of the story, points out that in seizing this book "Mr. Summerfield, in private life an automobile [*sic*], banned a play that is on the shelves of virtually every public library in the country and in thousands of American homes."

Mr. Summerfield acted in this case under the authority of the Comstock Act, an 1873 statute which gives the Postmaster General power to seize, censor and destroy literature and art sent through the mails which he considers dangerous to morals. This Act, Mr. Levinson maintains, is an abridgment of freedom of speech and of the press, and his suit is described as the first direct court test of its constitutionality.

"Lysistrata," however, is not the first famous work to be thus proscribed; it joins a distinguished company. In the past, zealous Postmaster Generals have banned such things as *The Leaves of Grass, The Arabian Nights, Candide, Robinson Crusoe, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn,* and *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* The shade of Aristophanes, therefore, can take comfort.

We can take comfort too. Good things sometimes come about from ludicrous beginnings. One can scarcely believe that the Federal Courts, now put to the test, will fail to rule so outrageous a violation of due process as the Comstock Act unconstitutional. And they would perhaps not have been put to the test so unequivocally had not Mr. Summerfield presented such a howling example of what silliness the Comstock Act can lead to.

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The Morality of Nuclear War

JUSTICE RULES OUT MASS-SLAUGHTER OF NON-COMBATANTS, OR EVEN MASS-DESTRUCTION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF EARTH

F. H. DRINKWATER

(Now that Western defense plans seem to rely more and more on the possible use of thermonuclear weapons, the question of the morality of such weapons becomes increasingly pressing. The following article by Father F. H. Drinkwater, editor of "The Sower" and a frequent contributor to other English Catholic journals, is published with the hope that it may promote discussion of this question.)

THE imminent prospect of universal destruction has now penetrated the imagination even of many "practical" men, rulers, diplomats and soldiers, though they do not necessarily draw the right conclusions; nor necessarily any conclusions.

What practical steps can we take to prevent or delay final catastrophe, and so perhaps get through the danger period into a time of sanity beyond? Is there anything that *we* (meaning by "we" the Western nations, in particular the English-speaking Western nations, their governments and those who influence them) can do to improve the immediate chances of survival for civilized man?

Until last fall it was possible—in Britain at any rate—to hope that the problem of nuclear weapons might solve itself, by mere time: that both sides, by a sort of mutual consent of fear of consequences, would refrain from using them until at last the cold war might gradually change to some sort of stable peace. Then in October Field Marshal Montgomery revealed to the world that "we at SHAPE are basing all our operational plans on using atomic and thermonuclear weapons in our defense. It is no longer a question of 'They may possibly be used'; it is very definitely 'They will be used—if we are attacked'. . . . We cannot match the strength that would be brought against us unless we use them."

Just before Christmas the NATO statesmen, assembled in Paris, gave their retrospective approval to such arrangements with a meaningless reservation that it would be for the governments, if practicable, to give the final permission actually to use the weapons. Nothing has been said, as far as we know, to indicate that nuclear weapons would be used only for retaliation; it seems rather that SHAPE is ready to be the first to use them, if there is any kind of attack from the Iron Curtain. Does SHAPE mean only smaller tactical kinds of atomic weapons, or larger and more devastating ones? Again we are in the dark. The only use of nuclear warfare hitherto has been to destroy cities full of people and SHAPE spokesmen have said nothing, as far as we know, to indicate that they intend to abstain from such proceedings next time.

One would prefer to avoid anything like recriminations about what has been done in the past, but when we remember what has happened in the wars of the twentieth century, all the hasty, unnecessary and indiscriminate destruction of people, buildings and natural resources, not only by atomic bombs but by so-called "conventional" methods of warfare, we cannot feel the slightest confidence that our governments and generals would exercise any restraint in a real emergency. This is particularly true now that all their war-plans are frankly *based* on the use of nuclear warfare.

What practical conclusion may be drawn from all this by any potential enemy who really contemplated attacking us must be a matter for uncomfortable conjecture. Whatever our potential enemies may be, they are not cowards to be scared by threats, nor do they set a high value on human lives as such. In England, just for the moment, the fashionable wishful thought is that the emergency will never happen now because both sides can now see that nuclear war would be suicidal; war has become psychologically impossible. That might be true if the thoughtful, reflective, imaginative type of person were anywhere in charge of such matters. The exact opposite is the case. Everywhere, in the ordinary course of nature, the men who sit ready to press the buttons are the "men of action."

WHAT then is to be done? It is not surprising that the pacifist solution has come more prominently to the front since the hydrogen bomb ap-

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peared. In Britain, the "Christian pacifist" rejection of all war has always been invested with a certain social and emotional respectability, owing to the sincere lives and genuine achievements of the tiny number of Quakers. In the last year or two the pacifist argument, for an active non-violent resistance of the Gandhi kind out of Christian motives, has had a much better hearing than before. But it does not convert the ordinary man, least of all the ordinary Christian. The ordinary man's conscience tells him he must stand up and resist the bully, especially when the bully is bullying somebody else. If freedom and justice are not to perish from the earth we must be ready to put up a fight for them.

It is true there have been several other alternatives proposed, but they have only to be stated to reveal their weaknesses. The first is: nuclear war only as a last resort. This is the idea which has been stated by Mr. Thomas E. Murray of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission. After pointing out that the inhabitants of the Soviet Union are human beings too, he said last summer: "If all-out atomic warfare is to come, it must come only as the last of all possible last resorts. And in the course of its waging, we shall have to remember that the outlaw nature of the enemy does not justify outlaw methods of warfare." One can only surmise what such words were intended to mean. If all-out atomic warfare is not an outlaw method of warfare, what *would* be?

Nuclear warfare only by retaliation is the most common of the alternatives suggested. For instance, in the *Times* last July, G. D. H. Cole and others suggested Britain should declare that she will not use nuclear bombs or allow them to be used from her territory until after some other nation has used them against us or our allies. But from the moral aspect if indiscrimination is wrong, it is just as wrong in retaliation. And from the military aspect, if your enemy gets in the first hydrogen bomb there is nobody left to retaliate.

Bertrand Russell says it is no use to outlaw nuclear weapons, the only thing to do now is to abolish all war; this should be done by mutual agreement, which could be promoted by friendly neutrals. But, one may answer, if there were enough confidence to make such mutual agreements possible, there would be no real problem.

These "solutions," it will be seen, base all their hopes on fear. But why should we expect fear to be the beginning of wisdom in *this* matter? It is much more likely to be the beginning of war. Just as ordinary criminals think they will be clever enough to beat the law, so the war-makers always think they are going to win, if only they prepare well and time their blow well.

MEANWHILE, the one plain and obvious way of meeting the situation is precisely the one which cannot get any hearing at all, in Britain at all events. Even in Catholic papers it has to be put forward as a lonely and extravagant opinion. Yet there is nothing new or original about it whatever; it is simply the reaffirmation of what has always been the ordinary moral teaching not only of the Catholic Church but of the human conscience everywhere and always: that while war in a just cause is lawful, it has to be conducted in just and lawful ways, and not sink below the human level into indiscriminate destruction. Since it is conscience (right reason) which tells men to go to war in this or that case, the same conscience has to stay in control during the fighting to prevent inhumanity and injustice; as soon as we use more force than necessary, or cause more destruction than is proportionate to the purpose served, we are fighting against the very justice and humanity we had set out to fight for. It is quite true that if we respect this principle it puts us at a disadvantage in face of uncivilized or gangster na-

tions which do not respect it. That has always been so and always will be. It cannot be helped, and if we believe in a God we shall have enough faith and hope to expect that He will somehow redress the balance even in this transient world, but anyhow in the next.

There is the governing principle then: war is only lawful in defense of justice (incidentally note that it is *not* lawful for mere survival), and therefore it must keep to just methods. That rules out mass-slaughter of non-combatants, or even mass-destruction of the natural resources of the earth. It makes no difference whether the damage is done by conventional or nuclear weapons; it is the indiscriminateness of the destruction that is the crime against the natural law. "Discrimination" is an understandable word, a civilized idea, deeply-rooted in the Catholic theology about war, and it still provides us with the key in the present crisis.

At this point in the writing of this article came the news of the British Government's white paper on defense, announcing that Britain is to make hydrogen bombs of its own. The language of the state-

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ment shows obvious Churchillian touches. A hydrogen bomb war, it says, would be "a struggle for survival of the grimmest kind." Churchill has no objection to fighting for justice, but survival, survival at all costs, survival regardless of moral considerations if need be, is his deepest urge. Again, "we must, in making our plans for dealing with aggression, not flinch from the necessity to use these weapons." Not flinching is another basic Churchillian idea, dating from brutalities he suffered or witnessed as a small boy at his pre-school; it is no mean idea, and we had every reason to be grateful to Churchill for it in the war, but in Churchill's case it goes with a small-boyish bulldog ferocity (once the fighting starts) which leads to mass-destruction, to demands for unconditional surrender, and such-like moral disasters.

Courage is a great virtue, nothing is done without it, and Churchill is one of the greatest Englishmen of all time. Nevertheless courage is not enough, and especially not enough at this moment. Again, the first implication of the nuclear weapons (says the white paper) "is not one of despair but of hope. In the Government's considered view this deterrent has significantly reduced the risk of war on a major scale." That is a bit of regular Churchillian electioneering humbug, or rationalization if you like; he wants Britain to stay a great power, so Britain must have the H-bomb, so the H-bomb must be represented acceptably as a peace-bringer. Finally, you have the far-off vision of better things which in a speech would be the peroration: the ultimate goal, "abolition of the use, possession, and manufacture not only of all nuclear weapons but also of other weapons of mass-destruction." But somebody else can take care of the ultimate goal some other day; to-day the small-boy-Winston must have his H-bomb, only to look at of course, not really to play with.

Perhaps all this is unfair criticism of a statesman of vast political experience, and undoubtedly most people, for the moment, will agree with what he is doing. But what he is doing is mistaken, because it disregards the natural law of right and wrong.

WHAT does it mean to do the right thing in our crisis? It is easier to say what it does *not* mean. It does *not* mean surrendering to injustice and tyranny, or standing by while the weak are being trodden down. And it does *not* mean wholesale destruction of ordinary innocent human beings along with the aggressors. Both these courses are psychologically intolerable, or (if you believe in God) against right conscience. Consequently only one course remains possible, and however unpromising it may seem, it is the one to be followed. We (meaning the Western nations) ought to keep ourselves armed, with "ordinary" weapons, and fight, if need be, to the last ditch (with ordinary weapons) to resist aggression. *But we ought also to renounce (totally, unilaterally if necessary, and even for retaliation-purposes) all undiscriminating mass-destruction and all weapons which presuppose it.*

Whether this would mean doing away with all atomic weapons is a detail for experts to settle. It could hardly be called "indiscriminate" to use atomic bombs on an enemy in the Arctic, or on a fleet at sea; and perhaps there are small atomic missiles which could be used with discrimination in land battles. The point is that *undiscriminate warfare should be effectively renounced* by the Western powers, even if they have to renounce it unilaterally. Even if they would but pledge themselves solemnly not to bomb cities and towns without at least a month's notice beforehand in each case, it would be something.

What would be the advantage of making the gesture of renouncing nuclear weapons. (As for the disadvantages, they are obvious enough.) The overwhelming advantage would be that a new situation would be created, the frightful pressure of mutual fear would be dissipated, the way could be open for real talks about mutual disarmament.

Why should it be the Western powers who have to make this gesture and accept this seeming risk? Because it is the other side which has most reason, or thinks it has most reason, for fear. Whether we like to think of the fact or not, it is not the other side which did actually destroy two cities with atomic bombs, nor carry out the "conventional" mass-destruction of World War II and Korea. It is not the other side which now threatens to use nuclear weapons at once if war breaks out. It is not the other side which has surrounded its potential enemy with a worldwide circle of nuclear-weapon airbases. It is the other side which has the most reason for fear; and which nevertheless is also tough against any sort of cowardice, which has unlimited manpower regarded as expendable, and which is geographically more likely to have some survivors left even after the appalling exchanges of hydrogen warfare. It is for the Western powers to take everything into account, and try to break the vicious circle of deadly nuclear fear.

Hardly anybody seems to have yet taken seriously the idea of unilateral atomic disarmament. The Government's white paper mentions conscience, but only to set it firmly aside, as thus:

"The consciences of civilized nations must naturally recoil from the prospect of using nuclear weapons. Nevertheless in the last resort most of us must feel that determination to face the threat of physical devastation, even on the immense scale which must

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now be foreseen, is manifestly preferable to an attitude of subservience to militant Communism."

Can we assume that the prospect of devastation is a deterrent to aggression? "The knowledge that aggression will be met by overwhelming nuclear retaliation is the surest guarantee that it will not take place" (white paper). It might be, if the non-aggressor alone had the nuclear weapons. But if both sides have them and are standing ready to use them at a moment's notice (as will soon be the case if it is not already) then the threat of using them is not so much a deterrent as an incitement to a potential aggressor (and therefore also to a potential defender) to get in the first nuclear blow. The strain of the present situation can hardly go on forever. Sooner or later, through some failure of the human element, some moment of misinformation or misjudgment or mere nerves, somebody is going to press the button.

LET us imagine the worst that might happen if the Western nations renounced mass-destruction, dismantled their nuclear weapons, and invited other nations to do the same.

Let us suppose the Kremlin then sends a note to London and New York: they must accept a Soviet adviser in their cabinets, or else it will be war. The West refuses the demand, and puts up the best fight it can with ordinary weapons. But the endless Communist divisions roll forward and our armies are overwhelmed. Resistance is driven underground, but it will go on. The whole world would be nominally under Moscow, but would not the task be too great for the Communist Party? Isn't even the present Communist empire too big for its own purposes? And all this is assuming that Russia would take advantage of the situation to make a military war, which is pure assumption.

Or (if you like) before making war, or to hasten its victory, the Kremlin might issue an ultimatum: Lay down your arms, or Birmingbury will be hydrogen-bombed by a certain date. The government would do its best to evacuate Birmingbury and wait to see if the threat was bluff. Or conceivably, the Kremlin might destroy Birmingbury anyhow, even without much warning, just as a sample of what could be done. In that case, no doubt Britain would have to lay down its arms, as Japan did. The British would have to go in for underground resistance or something. But all this is the wildest surmise. It would not be at all in the Soviet interest to crush so brutally those whom it hoped to make into Communists. And the great thing to remember is that even supposing British nuclear-disarmament *did* result in Birmingbury getting atomized (surely an unlikely result on the whole)—it would still only be getting what is coming to it in any case as things are now; and the same goes for London and New York.

AND all this time we have left out of account the greatest factor of all: God. Those who believe in God can easily imagine that He might take a hand in history, as He has done before. All sorts of things might happen, especially on the other side of the iron curtain. God is there all the time, and those who are ready to practice indiscriminate killing of women and children in tens of thousands have just forgotten about Him. It can never be right to do manifest evil that good may come. To get to the root of this nuclear warfare problem, one must put the question in the right way; and the right way is: Is it lawful to fight for sheer survival, regardless of justice? For anybody who believes in God the answer to that question must be No.

As the present article is written by a Catholic priest in a Catholic journal, it will naturally be asked: Is this what the *Pope* says? This is evidently a delicate question to answer, since the Holy Father is there to interpret his own words if he thinks fit. On the other hand, the Pope normally teaches us principles, and leaves it to us, indeed urges us, to apply the principles to the facts. With all deference therefore, the present writer imagines he is only applying to the present circumstances the words which Pius XII has used, for instance, when he was speaking to the World Medical Association congress on Sept. 30, 1954. After allowing that the question of ABC (atomic bacteriological and chemical) warfare could possibly be *raised* if just defense were possible in no other way, he continued: "When this kind of warfare escapes completely from human control, its use must be rejected as immoral. In this case it would no longer be a matter of defense against injustice, or of the necessary safeguarding of legitimate possessions, and would become a matter of the annihilation pure and simple of all human life within the range of action. This would not be permitted for any reason whatever." If that doesn't bar hydrogen bombs in populated lands, words have no meaning. The Pope then reminded those present of what he had said in October, 1953: "It does not suffice to have to defend oneself, whatever may be the injustice, in order to wage violent war. If the harm resulting from the latter is beyond comparison with that resulting from 'injustice tolerated' then one may have the obligation to 'submit to the injustice.' "

But supposing this is right, what can the ordinary citizen, especially the ordinary Christian man, do about it? What can he do about it now, in the present situation, as things are? The answer is in principle: he should refuse to co-operate in mass-destruction.

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For scientists, factory-workers, civil servants and suchlike the problem is fairly straightforward; they should avoid anything to do with directly producing weapons of mass-destruction, and if necessary change their jobs. What about the military service? Should young men refuse to be conscripted? No, but they should try to get into some section which is not likely to be directly involved in using such weapons, and if ordered to use them (or to do anything actually contributing to the mass-destruction) should refuse to obey, whatever consequences they suffer.

The advantage of such a course of action would be that the ordinary Christian conscience would have something practicable to do, something that everybody could see the point of, without disintegrating and paralyzing the nation, as the total pacifists would do if there were ever enough of them to make any difference. The ABC-abstainers would not necessarily *prevent* ABC-warfare, because (alas) there would always be other men willing to practice it. But the abstainers would have been faithful to their own conscience, and those who were Christians would have to some extent saved corporate Christianity from complicity in the crime; probably they would make their government and fellow-citizens think very hard.

Altogether it would not be astonishing if Church authorities began to give directives or advice to their adherents to act in this way. If they do so, they will probably find not only most of their own faithful behind them, but also a large body of outside opinion. If governments have rather lost their heads in so unprecedented a situation, it is difficult to blame them; our democracies are too enormous and massy, our newspapers with their daily sensation are too unsettling to the nerves. But the average man cannot be expected to form a judgment for himself as against his government; he needs to be able to turn to the judgment of somebody or something whose authority is equal to that of the government more or less, and who *is* there? Some editor? Some political party? No, there is only the Church, really. If in this crisis all those who believe in God could speak with one voice for God's law, it might become clear that the conscience of humanity had been waiting for just that.

FROM FRANCE

Why Mendès-France Was Defeated

Paris

MANY Frenchmen find it scandalous that Mendès-France was overthrown on his North Africa policy, for he is the first Premier to have inspired the Moslems of French North Africa with a little confidence in France's intentions. His visit to the Bey of Tunis last summer at last signalized a conciliatory and understanding policy in regard to the native peoples of Maghreb. The opening of negotiations on domestic autonomy for Tunisia led to enthusiastic demonstrations; the people even distributed native dishes to the troops charged with keeping order. At Fez tens of thousands demonstrated in the streets to cries of "Long live France; long live Mendès, long live the President-General!" They hoped that Paris was going to bring back the exiled Sultan, free political prisoners, and open negotiations. Despite the delay in Tunis, the vigorous suppression following the uprisings last November in Algeria and stagnation in Morocco, the Mendès-France government nonetheless represented some hope of a better future for twenty million Moslems.

Public opinion in Paris recognized this. There was widespread fear that the tragic errors of Indochina would be repeated in North Africa and lead to even more disastrous Dienbienphus. Yet the parties whose policy Mendès-France was carrying out reproached him for his successes. The MRP, for instance, has bitterly opposed Mendès-France, yet in all its national meetings has continued to affirm its desire to give domestic autonomy to the two protectorates of Tunisia and Morocco and in Algiers, at last, honestly to apply the provisions of the statute of 1947.

Many Frenchmen therefore found the overthrow of the Mendès-France cabinet last month a sordid maneuver, ending the ministry of a man whose popularity and success had proved galling to his adversaries. Mendès had succeeded in bringing the country out of its stagnation. Mendès had liquidated the Indochinese war. Mendès was planning to negotiate with the East after having rearmed Western Germany. Mendès, once freed from the most urgent foreign policy problems, was planning to take the economic revival of the country in hand and direct the French Union toward new paths. Mendès could succeed; he could force into oblivion Bidault, Laniel, Pleven, Mayer, Queuille, etc.

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For that he could not be forgiven; once the Geneva agreements had been signed, his enemies decreed his downfall.

HERE is how they went about it. In Indochina France planned to remain in the North, trying for peaceful cooperation with Ho Chi Minh on the cultural and economic level. In South Vietnam she was supposed to assist in forming a genuine democratic government which, thanks to bold economic and social reforms, would counterbalance the influence of the Communist Viet Minh at the time of the 1956 elections. All of this was in accordance with the Geneva agreements.

Jean Sainteny did well in his job in the North. But those responsible for our Indochina disaster feared that his success would only confirm French opinion that seven years of war had been to no purpose. Therefore his adversaries succeeded in attacking Mendès-France on the grounds that he was wrong in attempting to reach an understanding with Ho Chi Minh and that by so doing he had betrayed France.

In Algeria the uprisings provoked by the extreme nationalists had been vigorously put down by the Mendès-France government; their party had been dissolved and their leaders arrested. An almost total calm had been restored. But Mendès also sought to attack the underlying causes of Algerian unrest: social and economic injustice, exploitation by French colonials, unscrupulous administrators and the often indescribably brutal and racist police. The police reforms announced by Interior Minister François Mitterrand unleashed the fury of the powerful economic and financial barons of Algeria. They besieged groups of deputies, the press, and captured René Mayer, who needed their support because he is a deputy from Constantine.

The five governments preceding that of Mendès-France had talked of granting domestic autonomy to Tunisia. Mendès-France declared that he was actually going to bring it about. He was too popular after the Geneva agreements for his enemies to believe that they could stop this. But the French Premier was quite taken up with foreign policy: Brussels, London, Paris, Washington, Rome, Bonn; he could not impose his way of doing things on Christian Fouchet, his minister for Moroccan and Tunisian affairs, who allowed negotiations to drag on interminably. Christian Fouchet is a Gaullist who was harassed by his party, which reproached him with betraying the interests of France. He imposed virtually impossible conditions for proceeding with the negotiations.

On economic issues the Government enjoyed the full powers granted it by an overwhelming vote last August. Here again Mendès-France was too involved in foreign policy to give the desirable impetus to his Finance Minister (and successor) Edgar Faure. M. Faure had already occupied this post in the Laniel ministry. He was not a revolutionary. He made the most of a business upturn and put the treasury in a favorable position, but did nothing about the major structural reforms urgently needed in the French economy. The industrialists breathed more easily. And readers of my last dispatch know what the alcohol lobby did to cause Mendès-France's defeat.

When the Premier announced that he would turn from foreign affairs and give priority to economic revival, the various economic interests, and their organizations, felt that the danger was at hand. There was only one thing to do: throw him out on whatever issue was available.

WHAT remains now that Mendès-France is no longer in power? A disastrous war has been brought to an end; the bitter problem of European defense is almost worked out; negotiations with Tunisia are well underway; the battle against the sugar-beet growers has begun. That amounts to little in the eyes of his supporters, who realize what tremendous tasks of national reconstruction still remain. But it *is* much when his seven months in office are compared with the past seven years.

Pierre Mendès-France has left his mark in the minds of the French people. Here was a government which sought to deliver the country from its stagnation, one which could count on the support of the people. Mendès-France has aroused the civic spirit of the French people: millions listened to him over the radio on Saturday evenings. For the first time since Pétain and DeGaulle, a Frenchman spoke to the French people of France and her future. He did not conceal the difficulties in the way, but he set forth the paths to that future, appealing to their energy, their sense of greatness and their generosity.

Now, for a few months, we shall probably return to stagnation, prudence, petty machiavellianism. Even if his successors try to imitate him—over the radio each week—they will find it hard to seem other than pallid substitutes. And they will have to contend with the aforementioned business interests who will react vigorously after months of being held in check. Unless there is an outbreak in North Africa (which is possible) or social upheaval in France (which is less likely) there will be no progress in France for some time—at least not before the 1956 elections and by that time there may well be new political groupings—perhaps a new alignment of the Left led by Mendès-France. Then the people will have a chance to say how they feel.

ROBERT BARRAT.

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A Case of Ignorance

This is being written in a hotel room near Hollywood and Vine. Perhaps because I again find myself in this improbable place, my mind keeps coming back to a fable that I have long wanted to set down on paper. Perhaps, just perhaps, it will say something about the meaning of Hollywood in American life. . . .

MILES grew up in a tenement on the lower east side of New York. Just like Al Smith, Cardinal Hayes, Walter Winchell, Irving Berlin and Leo Sorrelli, a friend of mine who runs a restaurant on Mulberry Street, Miles spent his childhood on the crowded streets of the lower east side. His family was poor.

You can fill in the details of Miles' background. To visualize it, try to catch "Street Scene" on the late-late show or any of a half-dozen old John Garfield pictures.

Miles was ambitious to learn. At first he just wanted to learn more than was taught in the public school he attended on the lower east side. Very few in Miles' crowd went to high school for the full four years. Usually they began, but after a year or two steady truancy melted into retirement. Not Miles. He went to school by day and delivered telegrams by night and that way got his diploma. At the high school Miles left behind a brilliant scholastic record. Everyone said it was a shame a boy like that could not go on to college. It was understood that Miles would have to go to work.

But Miles found a way. He went to CCNY and worked part-time. This meant sacrifice. Miles made many a sacrifice to do it. Miles' mother (his father was dead) and a hard-working beautiful younger sister also made sacrifices.

Miles finished college in five years. One year when his sister was in a hospital and unable to work Miles had to drop his studies and get a full-time job. But his sister recovered and insisted that Miles go back to CCNY. Miles received his diploma one beautiful afternoon in June. He left behind in the CCNY files a brilliant record.

Miles was beginning to think of himself as an intellectual. He subscribed to three little magazines and read the others in the 42nd Street library. When people said unkind things about intellectuals, Miles became angry. He began to take it personally. Just taking it personally that way, when you think of it, was quite a triumph for a boy who grew up on the lower east side. Miles was determined to continue his studies. He now moved in a group that took graduate courses as casually as they took baths. By this time of course he had severed most of his social connections with the kids he grew up with, in poverty, on the lower east side.

About this time Miles had to make a decision. He fell in love with a strangely beautiful girl he met at a poetry reading. That summer they took lonely long walks and talked about life and love and the meaning of existence. They exchanged little-magazines and spent hours parsing ideas they first encountered in the *Partisan Review*. It was love all right. By September they both wanted desperately to get married. But if they got married, they realized, that would be the end of Miles' graduate studies at Columbia. So they put marriage off.

Going to Columbia meant that Miles had to work in a defense factory at night and attend classes during the day. Besides this he had to study. There was not much time, on this schedule, for romance. The long walks were fewer, even the telephone calls were cut in half. There were only the weekends and Miles gave Sundays completely over to study. It was hard on romance. The strangely beautiful girl got bored. She decided to have a stage career and took up with an actors' agent.

It took Miles three years to get his master's degree. His sister got sick again and he had to give up his studies for two semesters. But the glorious day finally came when Miles was empowered by a great university to put M.A. after his name. Everyone said that his thesis was brilliant, and one friend of his suggested that he cut it down, work it over and see if he couldn't get it published in *PMLA*. Miles' family and even some of his friends knew now that he was an educated man.

Miles was still employed in the defense factory and working nights and weekends on his Ph.D. thesis when the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor. He was drafted into the army a month later and assigned to an infantry rifle company after basic training. Some of his mother's friends thought that Miles should have been given a commission. But the particular knowledge Miles had gleaned had little wartime value. So Miles had to start his education all over, learning now how to handle a BAR, how to use a bayonet, how to throw a hand grenade. At the Southern camp where Miles did his combat training, he left behind no brilliant record. It was the first time.

While he trained in the States and even overseas, Miles kept up his intellectual studies. He was considered an oddball in the company but in time he became a passable infantryman.

Miles saw action in Europe. He had several close calls, but it was during the Battle of the Bulge that the bullet with his name on it finally got through. It seems that during the time of the German infiltration, Miles got separated from his companions. When he finally made his way back to the Allied lines, he was stopped by a GI sentry. The sentry was suspicious. He had been ordered not to let anyone through unless the man could prove he was an American. There were Germans, everyone knew, who spoke English beautifully. The sentry stopped Miles. "Who is married to Betty Grable?" the sentry asked. Miles did not know the answer.

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE STAGE

THE IMMORTAL HUSBAND

MR. James Merrill's play, which is receiving a fastidious production at the Theater de Lys, draws its wisdom and troubling beauty—even, I would hazard the guess, a permanent worth—from an achieved density of experience wholly rare in the contemporary theater. It is a drama of the most faultlessly wrought texture, within the meshes of which we travel from levity to an intimate tragic truth; everywhere it speaks with the accents of authority and moral poise; everywhere, too, it suggests the presence of a talent operating under the most intense pressure, sustaining, as it were, the full weight of intellect. Not often may we celebrate such a reconciliation of mind and theater, and I am obdurate in my belief that—to those still accessible to fresh experience—the play offers an evening of subtle and abundant pleasure.

The myth of Tithonus, to whom the goddess Aurora gave the gift of eternal life, but not eternal youth, is Mr. Merrill's point of departure in "The Immortal Husband." He has appropriated the legend with an impressive security and brilliance; it is always a form for the expression of his experience—a way, as Eliot said apropos *Ulysses,* "of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." Mr. Merrill has not imposed it as a gloss on a contemporary fable, but rather has chosen to dramatize—in a triptych of superficially disconnected scenes—the imaginative substance of the myth itself, its embodied truth. Each of the three panels is drawn with a sensibility ever responsive to alterations of mood or feeling; each recreates a terminal in the familiar landscape of naturalism—a claustral Victorian parlor, heavy with decorum; a melancholy Russian afternoon, with its sudden accesses of muted pathos; a scene of domestic rancor on a banal American terrace—yet beneath the known surface, there is a kind of interior burning. Nothing is as it seems, this world is not the real world; the past continually impinges on the present, the present falls away to disclose the husks of the past. A note is struck, then melts into the common speech, only to echo again later with a gathered and ominous resonance of experience. The language of casual statement, so lucid and elegant, imperceptibly darkens into complexity: these modulations of intensity seem to me no less faultlessly arranged than those of Eliot's later plays.

This is a production of secure and quiet felicities, admirably visualized in Richard Hare's ingenious decors, most artfully lit by Peggy Clark. The direction of Herbert Machiz animates it everywhere into theatrical life and movement; the cast plays with excellence and resource, though one might wish occasionally for a heightened ardor or emotional expressiveness—the text will support it. The evening's bright particular star is Anne Meacham, an Aurora whose volatility and eerie prescience visibly suggest the world of uncommitted spirit which Mr. Merrill has so subtly embodied in the role.

About beauty, there is always some strangeness in the proportion: art imposes its own conventions, and the task of criticism must be to dissolve the shell of our resistance to fresh experience. Yet a play is vulnerable as a book, a poem, a painting never is, for neglect withers the play at its vital center. I would urge, then, an immediate support for "The Immortal Husband." It is a drama with the responsible interest of serious art, speaking to us intimately and with power of what concerns us all: time and fatality, waste and aspiration. It joins that small company of plays—Robert Hivnor's comedy of last year, "The Ticklish Acrobat," was another—with which, I am convinced, the American theater must ultimately come to terms. *(At the Theater de Lys.)*

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

UNSTILL SITS THE SCHOOLHOUSE

READERS of *Blackboard Jungle,* Evan Hunter's provocative novel about conditions in a New York vocational school, were divided into several camps: those, including some teachers, who thought the book was too extreme; those, also including some teachers, who thought the book was accurate but dwelt too heavily on the grim side; and those who were horrified to learn that a city high school could be the breeding ground for juvenile delinquency. Viewers of the movie version with the same title may be equally divided, but they'll probably agree on one point: the vivid and realistic visualization of this story, about an idealistic teacher who tries to get through to his class of seemingly incorrigible roughnecks, is pretty hard to take. So, no doubt, are the facts. But the script, written by Richard Brooks, who also directed the picture with relentless vigor and anger, selects the more sordid details and piles them up in such a way that, though they may be true, they seem contrived.

Glenn Ford gives an excellent performance as the new teacher who comes with high hopes and standards to the Manual Trades High School. The already disillusioned teachers say there is little teaching but

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lots of policing; one particularly cynical member of the faculty (effectively played by Louis Calhern) calls the school the garbage can of the education system. It is true that the faculty themselves don't always act wisely: they have a right no doubt to Martinis after a hard day battling these junior gangsters, but it might be better if they enjoyed their drinks at bars far from the school; the teacher (Richard Kiley) who brought his valuable record collection to class and saw it deliberately smashed by the ruthless hoodlums was not exactly prudent; the teacher (Margaret Hayes) who develops a yen for married Glenn Ford behaves like a love-sick high-school girl. No doubt a vocational school of this kind, where many of the boys are only marking time until they can get working papers or are drafted, needs exceptional teachers. Ford portrays an exceptional teacher; he says, in a visit to another school (a scene thrown in, no doubt, to show audiences that New York does have some good schools): "Most of us want to do something creative; I want to teach." But he resents the low salary ("Even a prostitute gets more than we do"), the poor working conditions and the depravity of the kids.

But what keeps "Blackboard Jungle" from being unbearably grim is this teacher's firm belief that he can and will get to these boys and help them—even after a gang beats him up, even after the principal, who insists there is no discipline problem in this school, accuses him of racial discrimination when he tries to teach racial tolerance, and even after one of the pupils writes his pregnant wife (Anne Francis) a series of nasty anonymous notes. How this good teacher does finally win over some of the boys makes for, not pleasant entertainment, but exciting and thoughtful cinema. The finale, after a vicious classroom fight in which one of the bullies draws a knife on the teacher, is like an Aristotelian catharsis or like the big scene near the end of one of Dickens' indignant social novels. You find yourself fighting for this teacher; and his victory, both physical and mental, is your victory.

Richard Brooks deserves credit for directing so well in "Blackboard Jungle" all the young men in roles that could easily have become caricatures of gangsters. Outstanding are Sidney Poitier as Miller who knows he is handicapped by being a Negro but has the potentialities of a leader (Ford really works to help this boy) and Vic Morrow as West, an almost hopelessly depraved youth who is a menace to society. (One wonders watching Morrow if every young man is going to make like Brando when portraying bad boys.) Applause should also go to Pandro S. Berman for the high quality of this film's entire production.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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OF NOTE

THE ULTRACONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC

IN the March issue of *The Sign,* the national Catholic magazine published by the Passionist Fathers (Union City, New Jersey), an editorial signed by the editor, Father Ralph Gorman, discusses "The Ultraconservative Catholic." We here reprint the editorial in full:

There's been a lot of talk about liberal Catholics. We haven't heard much about ultraconservative Catholics, although we think they are more numerous. We haven't space to describe the species but here are a few general characteristics.

The ultraconservative Catholic has great difficulty accepting labor unions. He may not deny explicit Church doctrine that workingmen have a natural right to organize. His attitude is: "Unions are all right, but . . ." It's the "but" that matters. He never finds a union without defects, so he never finds one that is acceptable. To him all unions are Red or pink or leftist or corrupt or gangster-ridden or predatory. If he applied the same rigid norms to other groups, he would have to reject every organization functioning in this poor world of ours.

The ultraconservative Catholic also has an allergy to anything that smacks of international cooperation. In fact, the word international is in itself derogatory. He can understand charity between individuals, but not between nations. He is often generous in aiding the weak, the needy, the orphan, the homeless. But let Uncle Sam do the same thing on an international scale and he immediately cries out in alarm. He is suspicious of all moves to lessen restrictions on immigration so that some of Europe's pitiful escapees, refugees, and expellees can be admitted to this country. Without realizing it, his attitude is expressed in the cynical question of the first fratricide: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

The ultraconservative Catholic belongs to an international organization in the religious sphere, but he just can't accept an international organization in the secular sphere. Few would be so silly as to deny the defeats and weaknesses of the UN as it is now organized and functions. But that it should be disbanded and its buildings closed is quite another thing. At least the UN is a step in the right direction. It is accepted as such by the Holy Father, to whom our ultraconservative friends could listen to their great advantage.

The organization within the UN that almost gives the ultraconservative a stroke is UNESCO. Like its parent organization, UNESCO has defects, but it's good enough to secure the co-operation of the Holy Father. The Pope has shown his good will by sending a permanent observer to UNESCO.

The ultraconservative Catholic has something in common with Hitler, Mussolini, and Peron. In this, he is usually the wealthy, employer type. He thinks ecclesiastics should be confined to the sacristy and to mouthing general religious principles without applying them to the hard realities of daily economic life. To this type, Westbrook Pegler is a minor deity, although his knowledge of Catholic social teaching just about equals a Hottentot's. In a recent effusion, Pegler declared with ultrapontifical certainty: "The right-to-work or open-shop issue is a political problem within the authority of the States. Any religious counsel, whether of the Vatican or any council of ministers or rabbis is only advisory."

There are a lot of ultraconservative Catholics who agree with Pegler in spite of the forceful denunciations of these laws by some of our bishops. Such laws involve a moral issue, a question of justice. They are in a sphere in which the Church has a right to teach. Pope Pius XI made this principle clear in his Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno:* "The deposit of truth that God committed to us and the grave duty of disseminating and interpreting the whole moral law, and of urging it in season and out of season, bring under and subject to our supreme jurisdiction not only the social order but economic activities themselves."

The explanation of the ultraconservative Catholic lies in his ignorance. He is unacquainted with Catholic social teaching. He has no knowledge of the great documents in which recent popes have given us their divinely authorized guidance to help us solve the problems that we face today.

As a beginning we would like to prescribe for the ultraconservative Catholic a daily reading of papal declarations in place of his favorite right-wing columnist.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE NARROWING GAP"

St. Louis, Mo.

TO the Editors: Professor Hinton [Feb. 18] has ably contrasted the economic problems and developmental programs of free India and Communist China in his excellent article, "The Narrowing Gap." With his recommendation that the United States buy insurance for the future by investing in India and with his emphasis upon the priority of capital over technicians, I cannot disagree. However, I do feel that his fear of anarchy in India does not do justice to the strength of India's political institutions.

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Anarchy is essentially a political phenomenon, as the experience of France and Italy attests. When a nation's political institutions are not equal to the task of government, instability, the first step toward anarchy, is an ever-present omen. The unique institutions of democracy are no exception to this rule. . . .

India's 1950 Constitution provides for three basic institutions whose value in preventing anarchy is important today and will even be more important in the future:

(1) *A highly centralized federation.* While India's States have many of the responsibilities of government associated with the American states they are much more coordinated into a national pattern. Rule from the Center can easily replace local government should the occasion demand. The Governors and *Rajpramukhs,* who function as Chiefs of State and not as locally responsible rulers under the parliamentary system in the States, are primarily responsible to the Center. Although their formal role in State politics is limited, they have influence and techniques which can be used to bring State governments into line with national policy. We need only to recall the 1952 situation in Madras State when the demoralized Congress party failed to secure a majority of the seats in the Legislative Assembly, saw five of its six cabinet ministers defeated in their constituencies, and faced a Communist-led opposition almost as strong as itself—and much more vocal in asserting its right to govern. The Governor recognized the seriousness of the crisis and he utilized an inconspicuous Constitutional provision which allowed him to appoint prominent representatives of the arts, sciences and social service to the Legislative Council, the upper house of the Legislature. He appointed the retired Governor-General of India, M. C. Rajagopalacharia, a native of Madras and a vehement anti-Communist, to the Council. Rajagopalacharia then could lead the disorganized Congressmen and form a government marked by stability and able to execute a strong anti-Communist program.

(2) *The English parliamentary system.* The form of India's government, both at the Center and in the States, is the English parliamentary system. Especially important is the provision that the government, if overthrown, has a clear-cut right of dissolution. The Prime Minister can dissolve the legislature and call a new election. This is a most unpleasant experience for rank and file members. Hence there is an incentive for the majority to hold together under their leaders so that they will not have to fight for their seats. For this right of dissolution to be most effective a government backed by a single-party majority is needed. Such a majority exists in New Delhi, and will probably continue to exist there for several more elections, but it has not yet been attained in all the states. . . .

(3) *The electoral law.* India's electoral law, like that of England and the United States, provides for single-member districts with plurality victories in choosing members of the legislatures. There are good grounds for expecting that because of this electoral law India's party system will eventually be of the two-party type. Other parties will exist, as in the United States and England, but they will lack political potency. The reason for this expectation is rather simple. Plurality victories encourage consolidation of parties which realize that they have more to gain by supporting rather than opposing similar groups. The 1952 Indian elections saw over a hundred parties, twelve of them national, competing. Except for the Communists, the KMPP, the Socialists, and the Congress, all fared very badly. The Congress won seventy-four per cent of the seats in the House of the People with only forty-five per cent of the popular vote. How did this happen? Briefly because over half of its seats were won in contests with two or more other parties by pluralities sometimes as low as thirty-five per cent. Already the process of consolidation is taking place and by the 1956-1957 elections there should be only four national parties: The right-center Congress, the left-center Praja-Socialists, the Communalist right and the Communist left. Definitive projections regarding the outcome of the elections cannot be made, but I believe that the next elections will disclose another Congress victory (of less magnitude than in 1952), Praja-Socialist gains at the expense of the Congress, and little change in the parliamentary positions of the Communists and the Hindu Communalists. While very noisy and capable of much mischief in the country, the extremists will be isolated in parliament even more effectively than they now are. For the Praja-Socialists should be strong enough to serve as an effective moderate opposition and thus put the extremists in a parliamentary position akin to Britain's Communists and Moseley-ites. They will be unable to prevent the government from functioning and thereby engender anarchy.

However, the main point of this letter is whether anarchy does threaten India—with or without large-scale American capital assistance. Anarchy, by definition, is a political condition, not an economic one (although I do not wish to minimize the close relationship between politics and economics). So long as the basic political institutions of a country are workable, government will be able to carry on. Its task will not always be easy—economic stagnation and regression will make it more difficult—but there will at least be no threat from defective institutions as there is in France today. India's basic institutions are adequate for her political tasks. So let us not sell her short.

EDWARD R. O'CONNOR.

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Life in the Movie Magazines

JOHN P. SISK

IT is widely believed that most readers of movie magazines are women located under hair dryers, though this may be nothing more than the counterpart to the myth that men always sing in showers. The only time I ever saw a woman under a hair dryer she was reading *Harper's,* whatever that proves. I have, however, seen these journals being read everywhere else, from shoeshine parlors to faculty lounges, with facial expressions that range from wide-eyed absorption to the kind of supercilious disgust that has lurking in it a furtive fascination.

It is not the kind of reading that one boasts about. Even our baby sitter reads her inevitable *Photoplay* with an air of refined boredom, as though making a concession to the world's folly. Most genuinely serious people do not, I imagine, read this kind of literature at all, or at least are successful in not being caught at it. This is a mistake; like all forms of popular entertainment, it rewards serious study. Simply to dismiss it as supplying to an adolescently movie-crazy public the gossip-nurture that *The Sporting News* supplies baseball fans, or as providing daydream material about sex and fabulous success, or as ameliorating the humdrum of a mechanized civilization that finds it increasingly necessary to live vicariously, is to miss some of the more significant values this reading has for its large public.

In the first place, it shares with detective stories, murder mysteries, confession magazines, the popular press and the numerous "confidential" assessments of the country at large, the theme that appearance belies reality. Its world is one of revelation, exposé, peeks into private files, sorties backstage, at-long-last answers to baffling questions. Its habitual promise is to take the reader behind the veil where the fabulous people are fabulously not what they seem: the voluptuous blond, with apparently not an idea in her head likes serious reading; the pert, uninhibited redhead actually is terribly shy and scared to death of men; the laconic, tight-lipped tough guy is the father of three and as gentle as a lamb; the cadaverous bogyman carries all-day suckers to give to children he meets on the way to the studio and cares for an invalid mother; the sultry brunette sings in a church choir and ruminates problems of theology in her spare time; the carefree playboy, say those who know him, is really the loneliest guy in town.

I don't mean to imply that the movie magazines actually take you any further along the road from appearance to reality than any other medium that so brashly promises to get you there. The reader is transported only from appearance to appearance, which is inevitable in a world committed to time, change and appearance. The exposé is a dreary repetition of what happens daily in less luxurious circumstances in one's own neighborhood. The private file yields only the old vacuities and sentimental deceptions. Every revelation is the discovery of a mask beneath a mask, which both the unmasker and the unmasked one naïvely take to be the real thing. The view backstage is no less distorted and illusory than the view from the seats out front.

But the point is that people have a great psychological need of the experience of cutting through illusion to reality. This is why the experience is the constant theme of the world's great literature.

ONE does not have to live very long in the world to realize that things are largely not what they seem. This insight, in itself not necessarily any great accomplishment, turns some people into stoics, skeptics, cynics or hedonists; but most people it turns into searchers, who with varying degrees of intelligence, vigor and success repeat the odyssey of Don Quixote. What they basically hunger for is the ultimate substance beneath the shadows, but short of that they need the repeated experience of moving through shadows to what appear to be substances. It was the psychologist Rank, I believe, who said or might very well have said that people must have illusion or they perish. It would have been closer to the truth to say that people must have the illusion of getting beyond illusion or they shall perish.

Now the problem of a secular, materialistic civilization is to find areas in which this human need can express itself without ending in the blind alleys of stoicism, skepticism, cynicism or hedonism—which terminal positions, whatever may be said in their favor, have undesirable social and political implications. It is

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here that movie magazines, along with detective stories and exposé journalism, perform a useful if pathetically synthetic function: as surrogate experience for genuine spiritual adventure. This is one of the basic appeals of this kind of literature, both for those who write it and those who read it.

But even if the appearances of Hollywood are shown to be often misleading, movie magazines still present Hollywood in its revealed fact as the land of heart's desire about which they tell a fairy story. Part of the attraction of fairy stories lies in their serious core of meaning, to which readers or listeners more or less consciously respond. The fairy story of Hollywood is no exception. Movie magazines are an expression of our contradictory desire to have established in time and nature a material paradise safe from the ravages of time and the flux of nature, where golden lads and girls no less than chimney sweepers and bank clerks, who then will be golden too, do not come to dust.

Here the movie magazines perform two services, one of them surely not intended. They offer a sustaining vision of paradise that makes unparadisaical conditions bearable, but at the same time they reveal as in caricature the materialist values that to such a frightening extent really motivate us. Not that the man on the street, or the woman under the hair dryer, has necessarily made a conscious act of faith in this particular paradise. Temporal paradises, whether inspired by Karl Marx or Marilyn Monroe, are becoming increasingly hard for even the naïve to accept consciously. Nevertheless, the impulse to such a paradise is there, demanding satisfaction for the heart if not the head.

THE movie magazines, which appear to be an expression of our need of the ideal and the immutable, are also, though not so apparently, an expression of our fear of the mortal and the transitory. They never reek so much of mortality and the residual worm as when they assure us with gaiety almost desperate that here, even if things are not always what they seem, is paradise.

Moralists understandably take the idealizations of the movie magazines at face value and so find them a source of temptation, not only because of their general materialism—a shortcoming moralists often find it easy to overlook—but because of their erotic glamorization of the body. But basically the movie magazines imply a rejection of the body, a disgust with it as it normally as healthily is. The glamorization is the most transparent of masks for this disgust.

There are two main ways of expressing a disgust with the body: explicitly like Swift, implicitly like the movie magazines or the mouthwash and deodorant advertisements. In the first case the less attractive aspects of the body are abstracted and perversely concentrated on; in the second they are treated as if they did not exist or exist only to the shame and peril of the individual. The real body in the latter form of rejection is not only an object of disgust; it is an object of fear, a ghoulish Ash Wednesday symbol in which there is no promise of an Easter Sunday. So it must be ignored with a glamorous conspiracy of silence.

I DO not care to decide which of these two aberrations is the more disastrous to a normal and healthy attitude towards the body and sex, but certainly it is the second rather than the first that is the greater present menace. To put it another way, the movie magazines, which in matters of passion and love usually adopt a cosmetic purity of tone beside which the story of the birds and bees sounds lubricous, are superb guides to an unhappy marriage.

The implication is that the movie magazines are in their own glittering way manifestations of the Manicheism that taints modern civilization. In this respect they may be seen as one result of Calvinism's failure to achieve a humanly and Christianly workable definition of the whole man. From Calvinism's faulty definition, and the straitjacket it laces men into, comes not only the overt and covert rejections of the body, but also to some extent that sadism which in fantasy, art and act seeks to be revenged upon the body in its most attractive manifestations. In the novels of Mickey Spillane or James Cain, for instance, is not the body, particularly the feminine body, perversely punished for the torment and temptation it has caused? The movies themselves—but not the movie magazines—come as close to the punishment as they dare, realizing the good box-office of it. Poe's conviction that no subject is as poetic as a beautiful dead woman has been revised here: no subject is so profitable as a violently dead beautiful woman.

Finally, it is this Manichean rejection of the body, expressed so instructively in movie magazines and advertisements, that one must have in mind as he reads in modern poetry and fiction the violent and reactive assertions of the body, not as it is commercially glamorized but as it is in all its real dimensions. This is the artist fighting back at what he rightly senses to be an arch-enemy. Perhaps, overdetermined by his opposition, or yet completely free from that opposition in his own soul, or lacking the values and definitions he needs for effective counterattack, he ends up with a doctrinaire naturalism; or, if he is not tough enough and not honest enough as an artist, with an equally doctrinaire but perhaps more marketable cynicism. But often the shock he gives us is a prophylactic one; and sometimes what seems coarse or vulgar in his work is only a revelation of our own corruption.

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Robert Graves' Odyssey of a Greek Princess

HOMER'S DAUGHTER. By Robert Graves. Doubleday. $3.95.

By SEYMOUR KRIM

MR. Graves is one of the true necromancers of modern English letters, and one always picks up one of his books with the knowledge that a genuine surprise is in store. *Homer's Daughter* is no exception, and contains that same combination of boldness and ingenuity that has been Graves' trademark—not only in his fiction, but in his belles-lettres and poetry as well. Mr. Graves has always been an unusually independent writer, going his own way, or rather creating his own way, with the solid resources of sharp wit, industry, intelligence and artfulness.

In *Homer's Daughter* the bold twist is supplied by Mr. Graves' theory that the *Odyssey* was not written by Homer or any of the blind minstrels who perpetuated in song the heroic sagas of the *Iliad*, but rather by a young woman named the Princess Nausicaa, who is actually a minor character in the *Odyssey*. True to his imagination, Mr. Graves then proceeds to enact his theory by having the Princess narrate her own dramatic story, and tell of the events that inspired her to compose the *Odyssey*. The result—leaving aside for the moment the question of who actually wrote the epic poem—is a brisk, overly compact novel.

The Princess narrates her tale with both economy and verve, and apart from the large chunks of historical information which she must impart to the reader to prove Mr. Graves' contention that she knew sufficient history to write the *Odyssey*, the story is entertaining and reasonably convincing as an illusion of ancient Greek life. Perhaps too many characters and events have been packed into too small an area, but the detail is expertly spotted and I believe admirers of the *Odyssey* would be intrigued by Mr. Graves' realistic recreation of the scene. As to the legitimacy of the theory, the present writer is certainly in no position to judge, but my inclination would be to take it with a grain of Attic skepticism. Mr. Graves, in an introductory note, makes no joke of the fact that he believes completely that the *Odyssey* was written by a woman at least one hundred and fifty years after the composition of the *Iliad*.

Be that as it may, we must still consider *Homer's Daughter* as a novel as well as a piece of ingenious propaganda, and it is in this more important scale of literary justice that the book is not entirely satisfactory. The reasons are worth going into briefly.

Although possessed of a clear, incisive and nimble mind, and one that can organize its thoughts with authority, I don't believe that Mr. Graves has quite the disinterested love of character and narrative for its own sake that distinguishes the native, even if pedestrian, novelist. Mr. Graves' book is made for a purpose, like a well-constructed blueprint, and the very functionalism of the design is not quite appropriate to that savor of experience that the indigenous novelist offers. It is as if Graves used his detail merely to give flesh to the steel bones of his scenario, and was more interested in making his point than in giving the reader a chance to settle into his story and enjoy it to the full as a work of fiction.

Moralists and propagandists have never fared very well as novelists because it has been difficult for them to feel that telling a story for its own sake is the first and foremost requirement of fiction. The didactic writer, either to prove a theory or point a moral, rarely sees that the only convincing way to do this in fiction is in terms of the art itself, not by constructing a fictional argument and then crowning it with a climax that wins the day.

Thus in Mr. Graves' conception of the Princess Nausicaa, charming and refreshing as she is, we see pitifully little of that grandeur of soul and perception that would have been needed to compose the *Odyssey*. She is little more than a charming fantasy, made fresh by her English matter-of-factness and resourcefulness in the face of violent experience. Had Mr. Graves been truly serious about his theory, not as an idea but a reality—which is the only seriousness that Art accepts—he would have needed to illuminate it by using the full resources of fiction in his narrative itself, developing the very imaginative and technical devices that would convince the reader of the Princess' depth of sensibility. This in turn would have given more texture and feeling to his plot, making it less of a brisk trot, less an overly compressed dramatization of historical circumstances, and more of an artistic experience in itself. This is the first of Mr. Graves' historical novels that I have read in some years, but I would judge from this book that he gives much less of himself in this form than he does in his poetry—or, as is more likely, has less to give as a novelist.

The deftness and impressive technical skill in organizing and compressing a great amount of highly dramatic material is here, but the result is one of respect for the author's cool, mature ability and beautifully accurate use of language rather than of the reader's having undergone a genuine fictional experience. In this connection, why is it that practically all historical novels bog down in local color and hunks of information and oversimplified characters instead of giving us a world as complex, grave and insoluble as our own?

But then, one remembers: *War and Peace* was a historical novel by the simplest lending-library definition, for Tolstoy was writing about a time before his own. The moral is not in our literary forms, apparently, but in the false notion that time past provides an excuse to clip and trim life in a way that the same writer would not allow himself to do if dealing with the present.

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The Black Monks of the West

SAINT BENEDICT AND HIS MONKS. By Theodore Maynard. Kenedy. $3.

By ALBAN BAER

MR. Theodore Maynard, himself a Benedictine oblate, has done his fellow-oblates a service in writing this genial study. He begins by sketching what little is known about the life of St. Benedict and then by a series of easy stages proceeds to deal with his Rule, the *Opus Dei,* the vows, the missionary labors of monks, the history of Benedict's "Order," the ideals of Benedictine scholarship, Benedictine spirituality, and the particular contribution of Benedictinism to the world. In all this he is following well-traveled paths.

Certain themes, like Wagnerian leitmotifs, recur throughout the book. One of them is the thorny question of centralization. Ever since the Apostolic Brief *Summum Semper* of Leo XIII appeared in 1893, there have been fears or hopes (depending on the point of view) that the Abbot Primate he created would develop into a General such as is found in other orders. As Mr. Maynard slyly observes, "the other Benedictine abbots have managed matters in such a way that the Primate has his hands so full of other obligations as to have no time to attempt (even should he wish it) the enlargement of his office," To do so would, he adds, mean a "change in the whole character of Benedictine life." In another place he discusses the reasons which led Cluny and Citeaux to seek centralization and the main Benedictine body to avoid it.

Another of these constantly recurring themes is the question how far the Trappists (or, as they now prefer to call themselves, the Cistercians of the Strict Observance) have or have not departed from the spirit of St. Benedict as manifested in the Holy Rule. Mr. Maynard argues that many Trappist observances, such as their meatless diet and their adhesion to an almost absolute silence, make the Rule more strict than Benedict ever intended it to be. "The Black Benedictines, even when not keeping the letter of the law, were more faithful to its spirit." Mr. Maynard does not like the excessive manual labor of the Trappists either; nor does he care for their lack of privacy or their additions to the canonical office. It is not for a reviewer to pronounce any judgment on these matters—all of which have aroused spirited, if not sometimes even bitter, controversy: it is enough to say that Mr. Maynard's book is designed for present-day Black Monks and their retainers. Those who seek another point of view will necessarily read elsewhere.

It seems that Mr. Maynard did not consult David Knowles' monumental volumes on English monastic history, since they are not to be found in his bibliography. This is a pity, for they contain much that would have illuminated Mr. Maynard's account of the development

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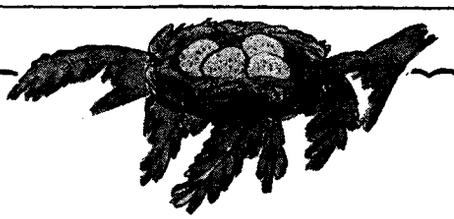

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of Benedictine ideals and practices. But he has used the other volumes of the " 'school' of English Benedictine authors"; and nowhere else can one get so clear a picture, for example, of the conflicting views of Abbots Butler and Chapman. But why will not the publishers, by reissuing their principal works, enable us to read these two authors for ourselves?

Welsh Boyhood

ASH ON A YOUNG MAN'S SLEEVE. By Dannie Abse. Criterion Books. $3.

By JAMES D. FINN

WE have in English a respectable body of literature that explores the corridors of childhood and adolescence with all their pain and pathos, their comedy and beauty. With *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve,* Dannie Abse would add to that body. An authoritative note informs us that "this book is not autobiographical, for events and characters have been thoroughly fictionalized." But the dust jacket tells us that Dannie Abse is poet and playwright as well as novelist, that he was born in Cardiff, Wales in 1923, and that he lived there until he was eighteen. The novel begins with a boy "ten years high" telling us what Cardiff was like in the summer of 1933, and it ends when he is eighteen as his father says, "He can't earn a living by poetry." And —oh, yes—the boy's name is Dan.

Dan's experiences are those commonly attributed to that fabled animal, the average boy. He has a schoolmate, Keith, with whom he is alternately friend and enemy; he comes to know the meaning of death through that of Keith's mother and his own pet frog; he learns of family strife and grievances, of the existence of girls, of the large outside world, of Berente, Spain and Dachau. The incidents, presented to us in a roughly chronological order, are related only because they happen to a single person. In E. M. Forster's terms, we have here a story but no plot.

As the events are unfolded we say "and then—and then?" But there is no causal relation between them; we do not ask "why?" The merit of the novel rests, thus, upon the incremental value of the separate incidents, and these, while interesting enough to read about, are seldom affecting or impressive enough to remember. Those that linger are usually the comic or the outrageous. Dan indulges in some wonderfully comic, Walter Mitty-like dreams of glory. And mad Uncle Bertie—hands down, the most interesting character in the book—wishing to impress a visitor and working himself into a love of Great Art, is capable, when his cat breaks some Swansea china, of shooting the animal dead.

A constant irritant throughout the book is a confusion attendant upon the identity of the narrator. Is it the child Dan, a mature reflective Dan, or the author? Our hero at birth: "When I was born my brother Wilfred bought me a *Comic Cuts* to read. I couldn't read then. Wilfred touched me to see if I was real. I was." Dan or Dannie? At eleven: "Oh, it was fairy tales ago, in days of butterflies and blue bottles. . ." Dannie or Dan? At sixteen: "There was a shriek that I thought came from Europe, but it was only the plaintive call of the train."

There is an odd "poetical" quality about much of the writing that enables it to be distinctive without being distinguished. It reads like a pale imitation of Dylan Thomas, or as if the author had waged a losing struggle to find in English the equivalent for a foreign idiom. When Mr. Abse resorts to relatively direct statement, he does much better. There is an excellent description of the ennui and directionless activity that fill the Sundays of many people, and an equally good passage in which Dan penetrates to the mystery of existence and holds it in his hands for an entire afternoon. These pages are so good that one wishes the other pages were on the same level, that the entire novel measured up to them. But they don't, and it doesn't.

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One Man's Revolt

THE HOUND OF EARTH. By Vance Bourjaily. Scribners. $3.50.

By JOSEPH H. McMAHON

IMPORTANT moral and human considerations lurk in the background of Mr. Bourjaily's second novel, like invited but suddenly unwanted guests. The author's interest in them, though, is secondary to his sense of exploitation. The pattern of intention is inconclusive, burned out on the embers of lost creative fire; the insights do not have depth and wear, rather, the one-dimensional mantle of a failure to understand; the writing, suffering already from the above inadequacies, is unclear. Everything points to total inconsequence. The inconsequence, however, could not be total; it is the yield rather than the deposit, for the points of departure are of very grave moment indeed, since we in this novel are in an atomic age, investigating the revolt of one man against the inhumanity, the senselessness of the thing.

Nobility suggests itself in the proud extremism of the protagonist; it is reduced to absurdity by the inability of the author to express emotion compellingly. The problem, once posed, surpasses Mr. Bourjaily's competence and fades away one clear Christmas night on the essentially insufficient comments of a man unable to understand the results of an intuitively enacted and cunningly sustained action: the negation, through flight, of his participation in the research that led to the discovery of the atom bomb. The title suggests an understanding of the meaning of flight; but the hero does not grasp it. One suspects his energies were exhausted in that moment of decision. Reflexes instead of reason are in the saddle, riding mankind.

Few demands are made upon a novelist: to sustain the key in which he poses the theme of his novel is one of them. But what is the theme here? Major questions are dismissed in minor key. The understatement is used so frequently that it loses its ability to shock, hollowed on the echo of embarrassed laughter. The lower depths of human degradation miss the inference of suffering. The mood is the edge of tragedy, the loss of personality, the inability to react; the treatment is inadequate. Only one character—the investigator pursuing the hero—emerges clearly, with an awareness of the possibility and the meaning of human action. He alone grasps the significance of the protagonist's flight. But the basis of his judgment is not satisfactory, for the two letters he finds in the hero's handwriting give no real insight into his initial motivation. They are straight from the school of social criticism genre 1930 and have no *particular* meaning in the aftermath of a smoldering Japanese city.

Mr. Bourjaily's insouciance is distressing, especially to those haunted by Miss Sitwell's three poems. Hiroshima was a rather grave event in the life of modern man and seems to have little direct connection with the sexually tormented, uselessly confused characters of *The Hound of Earth*.

REVIEWERS

Seymour Krim is a critic and anthologist. He edited the short-story collection, *Manhattan*, and contributes to *Commentary*, The Commonweal and other magazines.

Dom Alban Baer, O.S.B., is a Monk of Portsmouth Priory in Rhode Island.

James D. Finn teaches in the College of the University of Chicago and is an associate editor of the *Chicago Review*.

Joseph H. McMahon was until recently associated with the Pax Romana movement in Europe.

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Readers of The Commonweal may be interested to know that a portfolio of eight black-and-white drawings by Fritz Eichenberg which originally appeared in the *Catholic Worker* is now available. The drawings are suitable for framing. The price is $4.50, postpaid from the publishers (The Thistle Press, 35 West Twenty-first Street, New York 10, N.Y.) or at bookshops.

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Preview

Politics in the United States and abroad, intellectual and educational problems, Passiontide, and slums in American cities—all these will be the subjects of feature articles in The Commonweal these next few weeks. Among the articles scheduled for publication in the near future are these:

Peron and the Church—By Francis E. McMahon
Indochinese Premier Ngo Dinh Diem—By Howard R. Simpson
Demagogues in American Politics—By Reinhard H. Luthin
The Slums—By John Stanley
Public and Private Schools—By William Granger Ryan
The Status of Intellectuals—By Thomas Molnar
The Crisis of the MRP—By John C. Olin

The Commonweal's correspondents in Britain, Italy, France and elsewhere will, of course, continue their reports on the significant aspects of events and trends abroad. John Cogley will contribute his personal column each week; John Cort will present his views on labor and the social question. And the special $2 introductory subscription offered in the coupon below will also bring you fifteen weeks of The Commonweal's widely-quoted editorial comment on current affairs.

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